

# **“MORE” (Mission School)**

## **Module #2 – Focus on More**

### **RURAL CASE STUDY**

“**St. Eddy’s in the Country**” is a rural parish in a farming region. There are three church buildings (with three congregations) and a solid, experienced part-time rector (Rev. Sally Goode). There are two gifted Lay Readers who are seniors/retired and who serve the entire parish. Financially, the parish is paying their bills, but they have to do lots of fundraising to keep up. The population in the area is decreasing and there are no prospects for economic or industry growth in the immediate future. The average age of active parishioners is 71. Parish Council decided to focus on the strengths and assets of each congregation, and will not entertain the idea of amalgamation.

Church #1 / St. Frankie’s is located on a back road (3 km from the main road).

The building is 80 years old. There is no running water and there are no indoor washrooms.

There are 6 regular attenders and 12 households on the church roll.

Three congregation members gather weekly in a home with four local Baptists to pray and study the Bible. (The Baptist church was closed last year.)

The church has a large property with an open field. A pathway leads to a nearby lake where local people swim and do recreational boating.

There are a few committed parishioners who share a passion for antiques and making homemade preserves (pickles, jams, etc.).

Church #2 / St. Veronica’s is located on a side street in a town, that has just lost its town status and has recently been amalgamated with the larger municipal unit.

The building is 123 years old, has running water and small washrooms (not wheelchair accessible). There is a small hall in the basement with a tiny kitchen area.

There are 15 regular Sunday worship attenders and 45 households on the church roll.

There is a well-groomed sports field a ¼ of a kilometre away.

The ACW group of six elderly women is active, but unable to take on large projects like the traditional turkey supper.

Several parishioners own and operate local service-related businesses in the town: two are auto mechanics, one is a seamstress and another runs a corner store. There are several potato farmers connected to the church community.

Church #3 / St. Edward’s is located on a busy corner intersection of two main roads.

The building is 137 years old and has a hall facility connected to it on the same level.

It has running water and main level washrooms (not wheelchair accessible).

They have a kitchen in the hall that just underwent recent upgrades (new dishwasher, etc.).

The church property is quite large, approx. three acres, and mostly wooded.

There are 18 to 20 regular Sunday worship attenders and 53 households on the church roll.

A nearby campground is expanding their business due to a growth in RV/tourist travellers.

There is a good golf course located two kilometres down the road.

A number of the parishioners are passionate about their exotic flower gardens.

A couple of the men have gifts in carpentry.

## **Moving to be more missional...**

At a recent meeting, Parish Council voted to explore the idea of a "9 & Dine" golfing event, complete with a golf-related devotional time and a blessing of the golf clubs. A few parishioners frequent the local course and know many of the regulars, especially the retirees and even a few summer RV residents. Their aim is to connect with people who are not currently engaged in a local church, to build relationships with the wider community, and to share a Good News message about appreciating God's creation.

One council member, Frank Burns, voted against the idea. He said he objected because it was going to cost the parish money to host the barbeque dinner. "Why are we holding an event to give money to a business?" he said. "We should be spending our time and energies raising funds for our churches." He continued, "That golf course is doing well already, and what's worse it attracts people away from Sunday morning worship. We shouldn't be encouraging people to play hooky from church all summer."

Mr. Burns threatened at the meeting that, "If the 9 & Dine golfing project went ahead, he would not put one more red cent into the offering!"

Once the news reached some congregation members, another parishioner voiced her objections.

Tammy F. Bakker, called up Rev. Sally and stated that she was not prepared to support the golf event because it would exclude people who couldn't afford the luxury of playing golf. "Only wealthy people are into golf," she said. "What about the poor? Why aren't we feeding poor people?"

**CASE STUDY - SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:**

Mr. Burns is the Parish Treasurer and a former business owner. His bowling alley enterprise in town, closed earlier this year. League membership had waned and bowling patrons' interest declined to a trickle. He also has the first dollar he ever earned! The Burns family is in the top three of Parish envelope givers.

Ms. Bakker is the daughter of a priest (who is now deceased), and often refers to herself at congregational meetings as "the Devil's Advocate" and "the voice of the voiceless." She is the church historian and storyteller of grand times of years past.

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